

From The Daily Graphic.
Eli Perkins on Love and Hope.

This morning, I met the most disconsolate young man I ever saw. His name is Mason. He is from New York. He has been in Saratoga all Summer. He has seemed to know every young lady at the Spa, and has been an immense favorite with all of them. He has also stood a good chance with the dashing young ladies from Chicago, the flippy-floppy girls from Louisville, and the rich ones from Oil City. He has danced more, sat on the back balcony longer, and in closer proximity to beautiful young ladies, and walked over to the cemetery with more rich and aristocratic girls from the Clarendon, than any bean in Saratoga. And still this young man came to me yesterday almost heartbroken. His eyes had the look of despair.

"I am discouraged and sick of life," he said; "I want to die."
"What—*you!* you want to leave this festive scene, Robert?" I said, taking off my glasses and looking him straight in the face.
"Yes, Uncle Eli, I am tired of life," he sighed, in a hoarse whisper. "I came to Saratoga with a theory. I believed in that theory as I believed in my life. I worked for it day and night. I cherished it, practiced it, and worshipped it, only to see its utter failure, only to work out my own ruination by it."

"What was your theory, Robert?" I asked.
"Was it to bet continually on the ace—to wager large sums on the same card, hoping and believing it would some time win and make you rich? Was it—?"

"O, no; nothing of the kind. It was a social theory, Eli. You know I have blood and family and good looks. My pet theory was to come to Saratoga and marry a rich girl with a 'bad cough.'"

"And you have finally become engaged to the object of your affection, Robert?" I asked, becoming deeply interested in this good young man.

"No, sir, alas! Oh, no! My theory has failed. I have been unfortunate. The first young lady I met was from Chicago—Miss Johnson. She was sweet, and O! so affectionate, and had just the cough to suit me. A low, hacking cough. It was fairly melodious, alas, alas!" and then he buried his face in his hand.

"What, Robert?" I asked.
"Alas! in a fatal moment I learned that she had 'coughed' away with it. She was poor, but such a lovely cough. Just the one I had so long and vainly searched for."

"What then?"
"Why, then I met the rich Miss Lilly Thompson, of Madison Avenue. She was very rich. She wore lace and diamonds and a new dress at every hop. She suited me. She was just the girl I had been looking for with just one exception."

"What was that, Robert?"
"O dear, there were no cough to go with it. She was all health and money. There had never been any consumption in the family—just my luck!"—and then he buried his face in his hands again and wept long and bitterly.

"Again, Eli," he began, drawing closer, "one happy day I met the very object of my affection—the paragon I had been searching for for years. She was rich and delicate. She had just the cough, I had fancied in my dreams and sighed for in my waking hours. Two hundred thousand in her own right, and yet so frail and delicate!"—and Robert's face shone with a joyous light as he described the frail, rich object of his affection.

"And still you are not happy, my dear friend, I remarked, as he brushed the ashes of his cigar upon my boot. "Can it be that she refused you?"

"O, no! alas, she accepted me. I took her pale jeweled hand in mine. I placed upon it a thousand dollar solitaire. She was too frail to speak loud. She coughed and only whispered her love, while overcome with emotion, her languid eyes suffused with tears. I was too happy to live. But, O dear! Eli, I was born to be disappointed. Fate ruthlessly plucked the lovely prize from out my grasp."

"But how, Robert?" I asked.
"Well, in an evil moment my lily began to drink the water here. Not the mineral, but the pure water from the village hydrant. If she had stuck to Congress water I would be happy now; but one fatal day she drank some hydrant water. She felt better. Then she drank more—then more, till at last she used to drink ten glasses every morning. Then her appetite came back. She began to grow stout. Her cough went away, her cheeks grew red, and my beautiful frail Lily became a healthy, ruddy body. She took to bowling, then riding on horseback, and this morning—O dear! I can't tell you."

"Go ahead, Robert, tell me all," I urged confidentially.
"Well, this morning, Mr. Perkins, she—my frail Lily—carried her Saratoga trunk down two flights of stairs just for an excuse. Then she asked me to walk three miles over to the lake, and when we got there, O dear, she ate ham and woodcock and potatoes and almost an entire black bass, weighing three pounds, and when Mrs. Meyers asked her if she wouldn't have another she said no, she 'was afraid it would take away her appetite for dinner.' And here I am engaged to her, with no prospect ahead but just to spend my whole life marketing and spending that \$200,000 for her, and I to get only my victuals and clothes."

"And then Robert Mason leaned heavily forward on his hands, while the tears trickled through his fingers and pattered down on his white duck pantaloons—a wretched, heartbroken and ruined man!

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